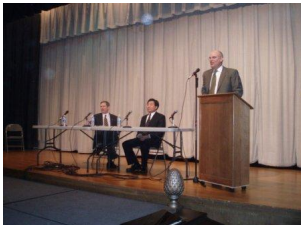


Today, I joined with Yuan Ji, the Education Consul for the People's Republic of China's Chicago Consulate, to celebrate the 10th Congressional District's only Chinese language after-school program. More than 200 students at Deerpath Middle School in Lake Forest met in an assembly to hear about the amazing opportunities that Lake Forest School District 67 provides for its students. Nearly 30 students currently participate in the elective program.

China represents the largest market in the world for U.S. companies, but in conversations with employers one of the most important concerns is the number of Americans fluent in Chinese. For many businesses, the language barrier is the only obstacle to expansion and development in China.

More than 200 million Chinese currently study English, but only 50,000 American students study Chinese. We need to increase this number if we wish to remain competitive in the global economy.

Last Congress, I introduced legislation that would increase the number of grants available for schools to encourage the development of more programs like Deerpath's. Educating our children is the best way to increase understanding between Chinese and American cultures, as well as build more prosperity here in Illinois.



Congressman Kirk and Chinese Consul Yuan Ji speak at an assembly at Deerpath Middle School in Lake Forest



More than 200 students, teachers and family members attended the event